

PASSING THE CONVERSATION AT THE POKER TABLE

Shallowness and Inanity of the Ordinary Talk in a Game of Draw--A Popular Stage Poker Game

It is a singular fact that nearly everybody when playing poker adopts a style of conversation that is both flippant and inane, no matter how well educated or serious minded that person may be. This sort of talk is faithfully reproduced in the first act of the play called "Sinners," by Owen Davis.

The act takes place in the New York apartment of Hilda Newton, the young woman companion of Willie Morgan, a rich New York business man and rounder of middle age. A poker game is being played, in which, besides Hilda and Morgan, there are Polly Cary and her male protector, Joe Garfield, a "fast" and Bob Merrick, a young mining engineer, who has recently achieved success after a long, hard struggle, during which he has been embittered through the faithlessness of the girl he loved.

Polly—Who's shy in this pot? Come on! Come on! Who's the bashful gentleman?

Joe (indignantly)—What are you looking at me for?

Polly—I wouldn't accuse you for anything in the world, Joe—but I certainly don't remember seeing you come up!

Joe—I had just two blue chips left. I'll leave it to any one in the party.

Polly—Nobody's got a thing to do but count your chips!

Joe—You win, didn't you? What are you grumbling about? You've filled three flushes and we've only been playing half an hour!

Polly (as she stacks her chips)—All diamonds, too! I wonder if that's a sign you're going to buy me that bracelet?

Joe—With business like it is now? Draw on! (Hilda shuffles cards.)

Polly—To hear you bleat any one would think the Salvation Army ought to open a Wall Street Soup Kitchen!

Hilda—Your cards, Polly! I'll turn the lights on! (Hilda hands out cards to Polly and rises and goes up stage to switch on the lights as Polly shuffles.)

Joe—You'd better, when she deals. Three diamond flushes! You drew two cards to the last one!

Polly (dealin)—I had a hunch.

Joe—You had a nerve! (Hilda has gone up stage and pressed button on wall-lights go on.) There—that's better!

Polly (indignantly, with cards in her hand)—What do you mean—that's better?

Bob—He's sore because you are winning all the money!

Polly (dealin)—All the money! He's getting closer every hour he lives! He called me just now with three aces in his hand! Three aces!

Joe—I've played with you before.

Polly (angrily)—Do you mean to insinuate?

Hilda—Come—come! (She picks up cards. To Joe) Play the game. What do you do?

Joe (who sits next to Polly)—When Polly deals I pass. (He throws his cards down.)

Bob—I open it—two dollars. (They all turn to Willie, whom they discover to be fast asleep.)

Polly—Well? Well?

Bob (laughs)—He's asleep again!

Polly (raises her voice)—Here, little one! Willie—they're off! (Willie's lips move and the cigar drops from his mouth to the table.)

Joe—He's a wonder!

Hilda (bends over and couches him on the arm)—Willie! Wake up!

Willie (starts)—Eh—oh—who won the pot?

Polly (sweetly)—This is another year, Willie, dear *** we are looking for a little more of your money.

Willie—Oh—(He picks up his cards.) I open it!

Polly—Thanks for the information, but our friend from the wilds of Canada has already done that.

Bob—Two dollars, Mr. Morgan.

Willie—All right. (He counts out a couple of chips.) Who dealt the cards?

Joe (meaningly)—Polly.

Willie—In spite of that, I'll stay. (He puts in his money.)

Hilda—Not for me. (She throws down her hand.)

Polly—Two dollars more. (She picks up the chips.)

Joe—Little Bright Eyes on the train again!

Polly—I play my cards when I have them.

Joe—And you have them all right when you deal.

Polly (coolly)—Your hand is dead! How many, Mr. Merrick?

Bob—Three, please.

Polly (deals)—There! Willie—quick—draw your cards, then sleep in peace. (As she sees him nod.)

Willie—One *** I guess I'll take a drink. (Polly gives him a card as Hilda mixes him a whiskey and soda.)

Bob—How many cards, Miss Cary?

Polly—I'll play these!

Joe—Is it polite to laugh?

Polly—Make your bet, please!

Bob—Mine aren't good enough!

Willie—Come on, Willie! Come on!

Polly—I guess you win. What did you have?

Polly—Flush! (She quickly puts her hand on top of the discard and starts to take in the chips.)

Joe—I'm going to look at that! (He puts his hand out to take cards.)

Polly (fiercely)—Let my cards alone, you poker! (She catches his hand and holds it.)

Hilda (anxious at the anger in her tone)—Polly!

Polly—If you don't believe me, call—that's what your chips are for.

Joe—What's the good of getting sore? I was only kidding.

Polly—You can kid yourself, but you can't kid me *** Deal the cards and put up for the Jack. Thank God there's two dollars of your money we've got a chance at!

Joe (takes cards and deals)—A man's a chump to sit in a poker game with women. I remember, once I told my wife ***

Polly (coolly)—I beg your pardon!

Joe—I—er—



The poker game in "Sinners" during which the inane and shallow conversation is faithfully reproduced.

Polly (with dignity)—And you call yourself a gentleman!

Joe (anxiously)—Now Polly!

Polly—Let me tell you something, Joe Garfield! No man with any real class mentions a subject like his wife in the presence of the lady he's keeping company with!

Willie—I wish you two would learn to stop your scrapping. (She hands him the drink.)

Polly (angrily)—His wife *** why don't you go back to your wife?

Joe (remonstrates)—Now, Polly ***

Bob—I'll open this one, too. Five dollars.

Willie—I'm there.

Hilda (throws her cards down angrily)—I haven't seen a pair to-day.

Polly—I'm coming alone.

Willie (to Joe, who is studying his cards)—Well, Joe? Well? You can't make 'em grow!

Polly—Give him time—he likes to dream he's with us.

Joe (firmly)—I'm coming in! (He puts up chips.)

Polly—Somebody lock the door—there's something doing!

Joe—And I—I—I raise it to ten dollars.

Polly—No? Anything less than four aces is dead.

Willie—Ten more? Humph! (He

looks at his cards again). Sort of reckless, aren't you, Joe?

Polly—You know Joe! The boy plunged! I bet he ain't got a thing—but a straight flush.

Willie—I got to trail along. How about you, Polly? (As he puts up chips.)

Polly—Well—seeing it's Joe—I'll just boost him ten. (She puts up.)

Joe—I—er—

Polly—Only ten more, darling; that don't mean any more to you than your right eye.

Joe (anxiously)—T—t—ten more?

Polly—Yes, dear, only it's bad manners to choke when you say it.

Joe (firmly)—I'll stay.

Polly—Believe me, he's got 'em.

Joe—You can't bluff me!

Polly—No, dear *** but in the excitement I'm afraid you've neglected something. Come on with the ten! (She points to the chips at centre of table.)

Joe—Oh! (He puts up reluctantly.)

Polly—Naughty, naughty!

Joe—How many cards?

Bob—One.

Willie—Two.

Joe (stops dealing in disgust)—Oh, hell!

Willie (winks slowly)—Holding a kicker.

Polly—Yes, he is! He's a foolishish guy, Willie is! That's what makes him so thin!

Joe (to Polly)—How many?

Polly—Well *** Just for fun, I'm going to play them as they fell.

Joe (furious)—No! *** Poker's a rotten game!

Polly—It's all in the draw.

Joe—And me with three. (He takes two cards.) You can't beat my luck.

Hilda (crossly)—Your luck! I haven't held a hand to-night.

Joe—Oh—you don't get caught in Dutch like I do! Do yer? I'm a fool to play the game at all. I'll bet a little one.

Polly (looks at the table carefully)—It must be a very little one. I can't see it at all.

Joe—Oh! lend me a white one, somebody.

Bob—I think it's my first bet.

Polly—Of course it is—but Joe just loves to put up.

Willie—Mine are too small. (Throws down the cards.)

Polly—And ten. (She puts up. There is a pause as Joe looks at his cards.)

Polly pretends to be very patient.)

Joe—I—er—you stood pat?

Polly (very politely)—Yes, dear.

Joe—Well *** (He picks up his remaining chips and starts to put them

in.) I—er—what's the use? You can't beat that kind of luck! (He puts his chips down.) I'll let you call, Mr. Merrick.

Bob—I drew to a middle straight and didn't make it. (He throws his cards down. Polly laughs and puts her hands out for the pot.)

Joe—You didn't let her *** Oh, my God!

Hilda—What did you have, Polly?

Polly—Flush! (As she pushes her cards away Joe grabs them.)

Joe—Flush! (He spreads them out face up.) Four diamonds and a spade! (He points to them in horror.)

Polly—The other diamond is the one you've been promising me for so long, dear. (All laugh at his anger.)

THE SMASH IN THE EAR

Continued from Eleventh Page.

aeroplane; a stop at a gleaming road house, with its broad piazzas overhanging the water; music, life, gaiety; pretty frocks and a place to wear them! Suddenly the Winburg Civic Art League became a vociferous power! Armed with the desperate resolves which come with sudden emancipation, it clamored so vehemently for the speedway that its voice was heard from park to park and from river to pond.

Immediately after the Winburg Civic Art League had exploited its enthusiastic feelings Sam Arnold went to the five newspapers with an extremely rare and precious \$500 for each of them and

bought advertising space to that amount.

The solid and well to do investors of the city paid no attention to all the chimeled gush. Their cash was comfortably located in 3 per cent. bonds or 5 per cent. mortgages, according to a man's fears or his activities. But the \$500 worth of advertising in each of the five papers was not designed to appeal to the solid, conservative investors. It appealed in large black type to the people, for this was essentially a people's movement!

A man could invest as low as \$10 in a share of Speedway Improvement stock and as high as \$100; and for his stock he could secure a hold on a home

The banker was surprised that this report did not seem to discourage Sam in the least. Instead, the young man beamed, and in his smile was the hearty cooperation of his white teeth, his blue eyes, his orange freckles and his red hair.

"I've passed out all the stock the small investors are to get," said the promoter. "I only set aside a hundred and fifty thousand for them. Frazier, you once said that if I got the City Council to pass the speedway appropriation ordinances you'd help me organize this company."

"Yes," admitted Frazier. "I'd see a splendid investment in it. But the City Council won't pass the ordinances. I've talked with them. They're not misled by this enthusiasm. They are solid, conservative, honest citizens, which is why they are reelected every year. They've run this city cheaper than any city of its size in the United States, and there is positively no chance that they would spoil that record by committing a five million dollar extravagance."

Sam glanced at the pleased expression on the face of old Tim Cassidy.

"How many investors are represented in your sale of the speedway stock?" he asked of Frazier.

"A raft of them," answered the banker, and consulted a memorandum card in his daily file. "Between four and five thousand."

"Is that enough, Tim?"

"God bless you, boy, it's a plenty!" and old Tim beamed on the young red-head. "Every mother's son that owns a share of that stock will vote for the candidates that's pledged to build the speedway; them and all their fathers and their sons and their cousins and their uncles and their pals. What do you think of me slate, Mr. Frazier?"

and, hitching his chair forward, old Tim displayed a list of names, scrawled on a crumpled and soiled legal envelope. "They're good men, every one!"

The puck red smile came on Frazier's lips, and every tiny wrinkle on his face seemed to puncture him at both ends.

"Sam," he observed as he reached for the subscription list, "you have every qualification for a crook—except dishonesty."

The newborn Winburg lay swathed in a mantle of white, even to the fleecy tufted branches of her tall old elms and oaks.

The only spots of color in all the landscape were the flaming red hair which waved around the face of Ruth Arnold beneath her saucy little bonnet, and the flaming red hair of Sam Arnold where it gleamed below his cap. They stood on the back porch looking steadily down toward the city.

Presently there came a new spot of color. It rose against the sky just over the City Hall; a gay American flag, jerking swiftly to the top of the flag-staff, where it suddenly flaunted out in the winter breeze.

"Old Tim's signal!" shouted Sam. "Ginger, the new City Council has passed the speedway appropriation!"

They spread their arms wide and threw them around each other, and did an ecstatic dance up and down the porch. Breathless, they stopped to look at the flag again. It represented the consummation of all their ardent hopes.

"At last the speedway's off our minds!" exclaimed Ruth.

"Until we get pinched for speeding on it," grinned Sam. "A promoter is through the minute the money is up."

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SURPRISING THE PARSON AT HOME AND ABROAD



FOR ANOTHER SORT OF FEAST.

Savage: "De King send me, sah, to dress you for de feast."

Missionary: "Ah, then you are his valet, I suppose?"

Savage: "No, sah! I am his chef."

By SAVILE LUMLEY



LOGIC.

Parson: "How is it I haven't seen you at church lately?"

Hodge: "I aasn't been."

By J. H. THORPE